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ABSTRACT

This study measured the attitudes and beliefs of teachers in graduate English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses regarding cultural diversity, and particularly regarding multicultural education and educational strategies. Subjects were 31 graduate students enrolled in two of the Education courses required for ESL endorsement. All of the subjects were or had been classroom teachers and were taking these courses in order to complete their ESL endorsement requirements. Twenty-six of these students were women and five were men. The majority indicated that they were of European descent, while one student indicated Hispanic heritage and another Asian. Students ranged in age from mid-twenties to over 60 years of age. Students in both classes were administered the questionnaire during the first and the last class sessions. Results indicated that there were not significant differences on either the pre- or the posttest for gender ethnicity, age experience, or class. Analysis for change over the time of the course found that White students showed favorable attitude change. Discussion of the results observes that pretest mean scores were already quite high and that this population was already favorably disposed to teaching language-minority students. It is recommended that future surveys be administered to larger groups of graduate students prior to the final class meeting. For the purpose of the pilot study, these findings establish a framework for future discussion and investigation of issues affecting teacher attitudes. (Contains 15 references.) (JB)

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Survey of Teachers' Attitudes toward Diversity: A Pilot Study

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For the past several years, both teachers and researchers alike have noted the increasing numbers of minority children in public schools in the United States. However, the reverse is true of teachers in these schools--more and more public school teachers belong to the dominant European American culture (Larke, 1990 & 1992; Reed, 1993). With such an increase in diversity in U.S. schools, colleges of Education have instituted requirements in multicultural education in order to prepare teachers better to understand and meet the needs of ethnic and language minority students. Such requirements will hopefully ensure that minority children receive effective instruction that is sensitive to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Because teacher expectations are capable of strongly influencing academic success, the attitude of the teacher is crucial in developing programs promoting cultural diversity. Unfortunately, many teachers hold lower expectations for minority students than for those from the dominant culture. Taking this limitation into consideration, there is an obvious need to develop teacher education programs that focus on promoting multicultural education and foster mutual understanding (Bennett, 1995). In fact, those institutions which hope to be accredited by NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) must include a multicultural component in their teacher preparation programs.

However, despite the fact that most preservice teachers receive an introduction to the fundamentals of multicultural education, teachers' attitudes toward ethnic and linguistic minorities often affect the degree to which they implement such multicultural curricula in their classrooms (Rios, 1993). Kerlinger (1973) states that "an attitude is an organized predisposition to think, feel, perceive, and behave toward a referent or cognitive object. It is an enduring structure of beliefs that predisposes the individual to behave selectively toward attitude referents" (p. 496). The underlying negative attitudes of teachers toward ethnic and language minority students may result

in unintentional discrimination by well-meaning teachers (Nieto, 1992). "Studies have indicated that educators who are not sensitive to the needs of minority students often are unaware of the cultural conflicts that cause barriers in the learning processes of minority students" (Larke, 1990, p. 24). Much of the literature on cultural diversity has focused on this relationship between the teacher and learner (Kennedy, 1991). In her book, Teaching language minority students in the classroom, Scarcella (1990) voices these concerns about the negative attitudes of teachers which often result in false stereotyping of minority students. While this is often unintentional, it is one explanation for the differential success realized by limited English proficient (LEP) students.

Therefore, researchers (Perkins & Gomez, 1993) have increasingly maintained that teachers must first begin with a process of self-reflection in order to understand their own attitudes and to ensure that their attitudes, behaviors, and strategies are in keeping with the principles of multicultural education. This examination of attitudes has often been incorporated into or used in conjunction with courses in multicultural education as a measure of the effectiveness of such courses (Dewitt, 1994; Larke, 1990 & 1992; Reed, 1993; Rios, 1993). Positive attitudes on the part of educators and students will hopefully lead to the development of respect and appreciation of ethnically diverse groups (Davidman & Davidman, 1994). When students learn to appreciate one another based on the unique contributions each one can bring to the classroom, effective cooperation that stimulates learning will result.

In order to eliminate teacher bias, Grossman (1995) suggests that teachers should begin by monitoring their own behavior to avoid modeling prejudiced attitudes and behavior. He asserts that developing this awareness is a necessary step to making positive changes. Environments for success are important in providing a positive atmosphere in which students can achieve. A student named Vinh pointed out that his teachers understood his culture "outside" but not "something inside our hearts." He felt the responsibility for accommodating by learning a new language and culture (Nieto, p. 258). Researchers conclude that the model of "mutual accommodation" in which both teachers and students modify their behaviors in the direction of a common goal is the optimal

path toward realizing success. This achievement is referred to as "academic success with cultural integrity" (Diaz, see footnote 20, in Nieto, 1992, p. 258).

One study (Larke, 1990) designed to measure the attitudes of preservice teachers toward cultural diversity involved the administration of a questionnaire to 51 preservice teachers who had had one course in multicultural education. Results indicated that these students still felt some discomfort working with students from different cultures and their parents. They were critical of non-standard English, and they did not object to the use of ethnic jokes. The researcher felt that this was an indication that students did not understand the more subtle forms of racism. The researcher concluded that one course in multicultural education was certainly not enough and that the issue of diversity should be an integral component of all education courses. In addition, Larke (1990) suggested extensive contact of preservice teachers with minority students in school settings. Reed (1993) has also indicated that change in attitudes and behaviors toward minority students may be tied to actual experience with these populations, in conjunction with a multicultural curriculum. For, "the effective multicultural teacher should have the knowledge and the academic, social, cultural, and interpersonal skills necessary to facilitate student achievement, regardless of students' or teachers' race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status" (Larke, 1992, p. 135).

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 31 graduate students enrolled in two of the Education courses required for the English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement: Culture and Education (EDU 842) and Methods of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (EDU 841). There were 10 students enrolled in EDU 842 and 23 students enrolled in EDU 841. However, one student was absent for the administration of the posttest, and another student was absent when the pretest was given. All of the subjects were or had been classroom teachers and were taking these courses in order to complete their ESL endorsement requirements. Twenty-six of these students were women, and five were men. The majority indicated that they were of European descent, while one

student indicated Hispanic heritage and another Asian. Students ranged in age from the mid-twenties to over 60 years of age, and there was also a considerable range in teaching experience: from less than five to more than twenty-five years of experience.

Procedure

Students in both classes were administered the questionnaire during the first and the last class sessions. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers from information obtained through discussions with colleagues, researcher experience, analysis of content of other survey instruments, and a search of relevant literature. The instrument consisted of 40 items designed to examine the students' attitudes and beliefs towards the notion of multicultural education and the implementation of multicultural strategies. All items were graded on a Likert scale from one (almost never) to five (always). In addition, biographical data on each respondent was collected. These included gender, ethnicity, age, and experience. Students were assigned numbers and were instructed not to put their names on the questionnaires.

The resulting data were then analyzed using a series of one-way ANOVAs and one-tailed t-tests for paired or correlated samples.

Results

The series of one-way ANOVAs indicated that there were no significant differences on either the pre- or posttests by gender, ethnicity, age, experience, or class (EDU 841 or EDU 842). However, the relatively small sample sizes for some variables (e.g., the small number of non-European American respondents) may have accounted for the relatively small differences.

A series of one-tailed paired t-tests ($p < .00125$) was performed on the individual items of the questionnaire in order to determine if there were significant changes in the students' attitudes during the course of the semester. The assumption was that the course in some way would contribute to the changes in attitude, although it would certainly not be the only catalyst for attitude modification. Table One represents the item number, the mean score on each item for both the pre- and posttests, and the values of t.

Results indicated that while student attitudes for the most part became more favorable over the course of the quarter, attitudes changed significantly on only three of the items. Item 9, "Behavior problems do not increase with the addition of ethnically diverse groups on campus," was problematic in that several students were confused by the use of negation in this statement. For this reason, the show of significance here is probably not meaningful.

However, significant changes were found on items 12, 13, and 36:

12. I feel that I will be able to communicate successfully with LEP students.

13. If I could choose, I would rather have a culturally diverse group of student in my class.

36. The cafeteria should serve meals that reflect the range of ethnic foods eaten in the U.S.

Of these, items 12 and 13 were most closely tied to the goals of the courses: the development of both positive attitudes and effective teaching strategies for speakers of languages other than English.

Discussion

Limitations

In order to administer this attitude survey instrument and expand the study on this topic, it would be necessary to reevaluate the survey instrument, for example by eliminating question number nine and revising potentially confusing language. This was essentially a volunteer sample because students had chosen to pursue an ESL endorsement. As such, the pretest mean scores were already quite high. This is an indication that this population was already in some ways favorably disposed to the teaching of language-minority students. Another factor that may have influenced the findings was that the posttest scores were obtained on the last day of class when students were feeling overwhelmed with finals and a heavy workload.

Table 1. Mean Score by Item on Pre- and Posttests with T-Values

Item Number	Pretest Means	Posttest Means	T Values
1.	4.548	4.645	-1.139
2.	3.742	4.065	-1.668
3.	4.387	4.484	-.682
4.	4.226	4.484	-1.680
5.	3.806	4.032	-1.315
6.	4.129	4.032	.487
7.	4.161	4.290	-1.072
8.	4.484	4.645	-1.306
9.	3.097	3.710	-3.338*
10.	4.548	4.645	-.902
11.	4.516	4.516	0
12.	3.742	4.258	-3.542*
13.	3.968	4.452	-3.321*
14.	4.226	4.484	-2.108
15.	3.839	4.065	-1.366
16.	4.387	4.194	1.647
17.	4.677	4.806	-1.680
18.	4.194	4.419	-2.244
19.	4.355	4.323	-.254
20.	3.871	4.161	-1.159

(continued)

* $p < .00123$

Table 1.

Item Number	Pretest Means	Posttest Means	T Values
21.	4.000	4.258	-2.108
22.	4.581	4.613	-.329
23.	4.581	4.613	-.373
24.	3.258	3.516	-1.092
25.	4.419	4.387	.254
26.	4.516	4.548	-.329
27.	3.871	4.000	-1.438
28.	4.452	4.581	-1.161
29.	4.516	4.548	-.273
30.	4.419	4.613	-1.985
31.	4.613	4.613	0
32.	4.516	4.613	-.769
33.	4.387	4.613	-1.563
34.	4.548	4.742	-1.985
35.	4.161	4.419	-2.108
36.	4.000	4.452	-3.478*
37.	4.516	4.710	-1.793
38.	3.774	4.161	-2.344
39.	4.323	4.484	-1.000
40.	4.774	4.774	0

* $p < .00123$

Recommendations

It is recommended that future surveys be administered to a larger group of graduate students prior to the final class meeting when they would perhaps be in a better frame of mind. The questions could then be grouped into categories, perhaps via a factor analysis, which could then lead to clearer interpretation and more comprehensive analysis. While few questions resulted in significant changes, positive changes resulted overall. Although change is not a direct goal of this survey, it is clearly a factor in the implementation of instructional strategies tailored to meet the individual needs of culturally diverse and limited English proficient students.

Collection of additional background information on previous coursework and experience with minority children in the classroom might also be advisable. The questionnaire might be administered at the beginning and the conclusion of the ESL endorsement sequence to determine if a positive growth in attitudes occurred over the three courses.

For the purpose of this pilot study, these findings establish a framework for future discussion and investigation of issues affecting teacher attitudes. Such findings are important in the education of teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse populations so that they may better meet the needs of their students.

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